

IN THE CLAIMS:

Amend the claims as follows.

1. (Original) A bacterial strain, characterized in that it is *Exiguobacterium* of the *lactigenes* genus and in that it has a DNA sequence, at least part of which is capable of hybridizing with genomic or plasmid DNA of the strain deposited on December 5, 2002, under the No. I-2962, with the Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes (C.N.C.M.) [French national collection of microorganism cultures].
2. (Original) The bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that at least 70% of its genome is capable of hybridizing with the DNA of the deposited strain.
3. (Currently Amended) The bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1 [[or 2]], characterized by the sequence SEQ ID No. 1 of the 16S rRNA:

GGTGCGCTAATACATGCAAGTCGAGCGCAGGAAGCCGTCTGAACCCTCGGGGGGACGACGGTGGAAATGA
GCGGCAGC
GGTAGTAACACGTAAAGAACCTGCCATAGGTCTGGGATAACCACGAGAAATCGGGCTAATACCGGAT
GGTCATCGG
ACCGCATGGTCCGCTGATGAAAGGCCTCCGGCTGCCATGGATGGCTTGCGGTGCATTAGCTAGTT
GGTGGGGTAA
CGGCCAACCAAGGCGACGATGCATAGCCGACCTGAGAGGGTATCGGCCACACTGGGACTGAGACACGGC
CCAGACTCCT
ACGGGAGGCAGCAGTAGGAAATCTTACAATGGACGAAAGTCTGATGGAGCAACGCCGTGAACGATG
AAGGCTTCG
GGTCGTAAGTTCTGTTAAGGGAAGAACAGTGCCGAGGCAATGGGGCACCTTGACGGTACCTTGC
GAGAAAGCCA
CGGCTAACTACGTGCCAGCAGCCCGTAATACGTAGGTGGCAAGCGTTGTCCGGAATTATTGGCGTAA
ACCGCGCGA
GGCGCCCTCTAAGTCTGATGTGAAAGCCCCGGCTAACCGGGAGGGCATTGAAAATGGGAGGCTT
GAGTATAGGA
GAGAAGAGTGGAAATTCCACGTGTAGCGGTGAAATCGTAGAGATGTGGAGGAACACCAGTGGGAAGGCG
ACTCTTGGC
CTATAACTGACGCTGAGGCTGCAGACGTGGGAGCAAACAGGATTAGATAACCTGGTAGTCCACGCCG
TAAACGATGA
GTGCTAGGTGTTGGAGGGTTCCGCCCTTCAGTGCTGAAGCTAACGCTTAAGCAGTCCGCTGGGAGT
ACGGTCGCAA
GGCTGAAACTCAAAGGAAATTGACGGGACCCGCACAAGCGTGGAGCATGTGGTTAACGCAACG
CGAAGAACCT
TACCAACTCTGACATCCCCCTGACCGTACAGAGATGTACCTTCCCTTCGGGGCAGGGTACAGGT
GGTGCATGGT
TGTGTCAGCTCGTGTGAGATGTTGGGTTAAGTCCCAGCGAACCGCAACCCCTGTCCTAGTTGCC
ACGATTTAGT
TGGGCACTCTAGGGAGACTGCCGGTACAAACCGGAGGAAGGTGGGATGACGTCAAATCATGCC
TTATGAGTTG
GGCTACACACGTGCTACAATGGACGGTACAAAGGGCAGCGAAGCCGAGGTGGAGCCAATCCCAGAAAG
CCGTTCTCAG

TTCCGGATTGCAGGCTGCAACTGCCCTGCATGAGTCGAATCGCTAGTAATCGCAGGTACGCATACTGCC
GTGAATACGT
TCCCGGGTCTGTACACACCGCCCGTCACACCACGAGAGTTGCAACACCCGAAGTCGGTGAGGTAAACCG
TAAGGAGCCA
GCCGCCGAAGGTGGGGCAGATGATTGGGTTAAGTGTGTAACAAGGTAGCCGTATCGGAAGGTGCGGCTGA

or a sequence having more than 97% similarity with SEQ ID No. 1.

4. (Currently Amended) The bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1 any one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that it is thermostable, saccharolytic and amylolytic and/or capable of producing L(+) lactate.

5. (Currently Amended) The strain as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~, characterized by growth properties at temperatures of the order of 40 to 50°C, at a pH of 5.4 to 9.15, with an optimum for growth at 45°C, at a pH of approximately 7.

6. (Currently Amended) The bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~, characterized by a guanine plus cytosine content in its DNA of approximately 50 mol%.

7. (Original) A bacterial strain, characterized in that it is *Exiguobacterium* of the *lactigenes* genus and in that it has a DNA sequence, at least part of which is capable of hybridizing with genomic or plasmid DNA of the strain deposited on December 5, 2002, under the No. I-2962, at the Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes (C.N.C.M.), these strains being thermoresistant, saccharolytic and amylolytic and/or capable of producing L(+) Lactate, having growth properties at temperatures of the order of 40 to 50°C, at a pH of 5.4 to 9.15, with an optimum for growth at 45°C, at a pH of approximately 7, and a guanine plus cytosine content in its DNA of approximately 50 mol%.

8. (Original) The bacterial strain deposited with the C.N.C.M. on December 5, 2002, under the number I-2962.

9. (Currently Amended) A method for culturing the bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~, characterized in that the process is carried out under facultative anaerobic conditions, at a pH of approximately 5.4 to 9.15, at 37°C, in particular of 6.5 to 7.5, in a basic medium containing a sugar that can be used as an

energy source by this strain.

10. (Currently Amended) The use of the bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1
~~one of claims 1 to 8~~, in food fermentation processes.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for producing metabolites such as L(+) lactate, characterized in that it comprises:

- culturing a bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~, under conditions suitable for its development and for the production of the desired metabolite,
- recovering the metabolites produced, isolating the desired metabolite and purifying it.